

THE THINGS SHE WROTE TO HIM

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"Soul Spur," etc.*



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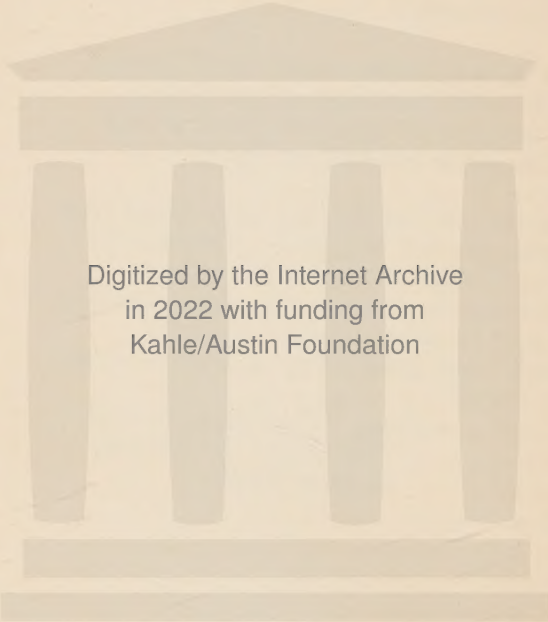
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Tonight he comes. O little kindly star
Hung quaintly at the window of my soul,
Shine silverly! . . .

Tonight he comes and in that little word
I do unroll the carpet of my dreams
Before this arrogant and gracious lord
Who has so stormed my spirit . . .

I do so love him that my heart would pray
Great pain for him, soul-tearing agony,
That I might kiss his suffering away
And blot his woe out with vast sympathy.
Yet, if he suffer, all my tenderness
Doth bleed great drops of life-red bitter-
ness!

—From "This Woman—and
This Man," by Dorothy
Landers Beall.



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FIRST WORD

Without a woman there can be no such thing as a man. This is literal. There is no possible modification. The truth of it is as deep as the mystery of life itself and as high as the nobility which some men achieve. No mortal man has been born save from the body of a woman, and few men have reached the glory of competent manhood without the nurturing love of a woman expressed in the countless ways a woman knows; and the full stature of the man and the full stature of the woman are found only when the two become one and thrive together through love. How one woman made of herself bread and wine for one man, who in turn gave himself to her, is reflected in the Letters printed in this book. There was no early intention to

FIRSTWORD

publish these Letters, but a certain happening has made it possible.

(“The Things She Wrote to Him” is the other side of the correspondence which appeared in a previous volume entitled “The Things He Wrote to Her.”)

THE THINGS
SHE WROTE TO HIM

THE CHALLENGE ACCEPTED

8

Of course your letter came. It surprised me and in a way pleased me, but I fear you may be sadly disappointed in your new friend.

To my first glimpse you are an idealist—roaming after the absent perfect—and most idealists, as you know, are slated for disillusionment. I wonder how you would behave should your thought of me meet its shattering, after you had been surely sure you understood me! If I should be there, personally, as a part of the

occasion, you would have to forgive any jubilation from my side of the house, for I just love a smash. It is fun to watch certain people when their fine castles fall in smithereens.

Frankly, I am not at all perturbed at your desire to investigate me, and shall go under your analysis with such equanimity as I can momentarily muster, disguising my real self not a whit. And if, during the process, I occasionally smile quietly all to myself, please don't think me rude but rather—just amused.

Of your early and tempered compliments, tacit and otherwise, I am not unconscious, though I wonder if I am warmly appreciative! One of lesser experience than I might be; one of

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vaster worldly contacts would probably hold them lightly. I stand midway. If I, in your thought, turn out to be what you are pleased to call "a real woman," it is because I have proved by wide and varied experience that, as I told you that first evening, *Life is the Soul's adventure and opportunity*. But if you do not wish to know a woman who is willing to admit as much after having gone through a lot of things, one who longs to go on living in the abundance of all that longing implies, one who counts frank and unabashed humanness paramount among things needful to the full development of one's life, a woman in whom is the passional desire to explore widely and find exactly what there is

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to find; and if you do not wish to know a woman who above all things craves to be held at her “true worth”—not a point beyond—then keep away from me! Otherwise, sir, let us begin our friendship, and leave its trend on the lap of whatever gods there be, particularly those who fated its commencement.

Surely, the Colonia for lunch; Saturday at two.

FREE LOVE

8

Young Mrs. Oldthought (a neighbor whose name isn't that at all) called on me to-day and stayed some time. Her husband, with a gardenia in his lapel, passes the plate in the new Antiquarian Church, recently "dedicated."

She was quite agitated on the subject of Free Love and talked on and on, not, however, in her own way; she hasn't any own way. She just talked and talked according to the easily memorized tenets of tied thinking.

I couldn't say much; it seemed like

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a hopeless mental situation; but I can write *you*, Mr. Man, Mr. Big Man, a few of the things I would have said if she hadn't made me dumb and heavy-hearted. Mrs. Oldthought reflected, guilelessly enough, the stupidity which bosses our village, but I've no time, these days, for unintelligent chatter about love, particularly when some one starts off with the idea that love isn't free, or that some of love is lawful and some of it isn't.

Can you think of imprisoned love? love that is not free? I can't. Can you think of limited love? love that is little and exhaustible? or pinched and shriveled love? I can't. Can you think of love that is local? or pinned to one object? I can't. Can you think of love

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that is legislated by ecclesiastical conventicles which say, "Love here, not there"? I can't. I can think only of love that is like the sunlight—ample enough and bright enough and warm enough for the whole, whole world.

I believe in free love because that's the only kind of love there is to believe in. And I'm going to love everything that is lovely and everybody that is lovable. Jesus was broader than that. He even said, "Love your enemies." After a while I, too, may be good enough and wise enough to love the *unlovely* and the *unlovable*.

Again according to the record, which is all we have to go by, Jesus loved freely and everywhere. His love ran not in a narrow channel and was

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never dammed up. He gave himself hither and yon to all who would take or "receive" him even in the slightest degree. He loved John, his best and most understanding man friend; Peter, who lied three times about even knowing him; and Judas, who sold him to his enemies for a handful of silver pieces, which, not long before his suicide, Judas doubtless jingled exultantly.

Jesus loved Mary, sister of Martha and Lazarus. This Mary was sweet and good. And he also loved the other Mary, who was a "bad woman." He loved the publicans and sinners and was criticized for associating with them. He loved Zacchæus. Zacchæus was a dwarf, a despised tax-collector

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and social renegade, but Jesus elected to go home with him and visit there. When Jesus passed by, Zacchæus wriggled his little body out of the big crowd of sensation-seekers and clambered up into a sycamore tree to get a look at him. This enabled Jesus to see him, and call to him, and become his friend.

Jesus loved everybody so much that he let other people bless themselves by supporting him, for he didn't have any money—not a sou marqué. He was poorer than the foxes and birds, which had holes and nests, while he was without cot or pillow of his own—had “no place to lay his head.” So he slept on his friends' cots, with his head on borrowed pillows. He loved

Jerusalem, which was smelly and sewerless and flea-ridden, and wept over it because its people wouldn't let him be nice to them and teach them what he knew about God.

After the contemplation of such an example, and varied experience of my own, I hold, with a certain modern writer, that "Love is lawful, all of it, or else it be not love but something less."

Is this letter an argument for a mere scattering of passion? Nay, Mr. Man, and then again *Nay!* It pleads only for the singleness of love, its full dimension of illimitability, and its concentration upon all of life and upon all who live. "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." "I am

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come that ye might have life and that ye might have it more abundantly.”

“Love is the fulfilling of the law.”

There is vast exultance in this truth, once one has gotten it and put it to use. Love and love only, limitless and unbound, has in itself the spiritual artistry to give each day its special glory and enable one to make of life a lawful revel with no aftermath of weariness or satiety.

Knowing this, and feeling as I do about this important but much misunderstood phase of human experience, do you wonder young Mrs. Oldthought shot a chill into me? Do you?

WITH THIS RING!

8

—————:—————

Somewhere, as you know, I have what is called a husband. Just where I “have” him at the moment, I cannot say. I have neither mislaid nor banished him, but he is not with me; and yet, despite our apartness, in strident chorus the voices of State, Church, Society, and Neighbors proclaim that he is mine, my husband; and that I am his—his wife.

Occasionally the same information is conveyed in news items in the public prints. I “have” not only him but

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his name also. "Mr. and Mrs. So and So are registered at the Corona," is the way they put it when we were "living together." Living together? Yes, that was it, at the very beginning, but not for long. Presently we were dying together—in a sort of marital suicide pact which, thank God, was never quite carried out, for we awakened from our stupefaction in time to separate at least while we were still breathing. I even had strength enough left to chronicle the event in eight rhyming lines which I called "The Pilgrims":

They tidied up their house of dreams,
The silvern floor they swept,
And put their kisses all away
Where memories are kept.

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Then, from without, they locked the door
And faced the gleaming day,
And one went East and one went West
Upon the Long Highway.

It was during my years in the same house with him that I learned the exact difference in meaning between "wedding" and "marriage." General mental confusion exists right here. Even accredited and popular biologists, psychologists, and psychoanalysts, are apparently so fogged that they speak and write blithely of "the institution of marriage" as if it were broad enough to cover every pair, inexperienced and experienced, unintelligent and intelligent, who have stood up together and solemnly sworn to love each other and be "true" to each

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other till they were actually dead, with the Church usually standing by to shift the responsibility of the transaction onto the ecclesiastical God who presumably saw to it that these two got together, himself doing the joining, or, more rudely, the sacred soldering, at the same time warning everybody from that time on never to resolve the joined two into their originally independent and respective individualities. "Those whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder."

I found, through sad and agonized later experience, that this well-intentioned affair, through which I went sincerely with my reputed husband, was not marriage at all, but merely a

wedding or wedding ceremony which eventuated in much *unceremonious* and totally unexpected unhappiness for both of us. Indeed, it came to appear that no kind God had had anything whatever to do with the matter, unless, perhaps, to teach us a bitter lesson we needed to learn.

We also decided, each and both, that our mistake in hasty choice and pledge of perpetual love and fidelity was due to the simple fact that, though at the time perfectly sober in all meanings of the word, neither of us had the faintest idea of what we were doing. All unwittingly, and temporarily very much enamored, we promised things we couldn't for the life of us carry out under the practical test of prolonged

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domesticity. Our honest thought was of true marriage and permanent blessedness, but all we actually got was a wedding certificate, a dose of hell, and some expensive experience which we, separately, are now probably qualified to use to vast advantage.

Through it all I think we tried to do our best to arrive at decency and felicity, but our best could scarcely have been worse. We were just untaught and youthful emotionalists—two small children of Life stumbling along gradually diverging paths, with an unhearted State, a frozen Church, a stupid Society and a censorious and gossipy Neighborhood watching us closely and yawping: “What’s the matter with you two people? Can’t you

get along with each other? Aren't you *married?*"

No, we weren't married. We'd just had a wedding, that's all. Our earnest yet only half-understood desire to be married hadn't worked out, and this was largely because we didn't know *how* to be married. We conscientiously reckoned that if we went through the wedding, took a train with our new baggage, slept together in a strange bed in a strange hotel that first night, played around through a two-weeks honeymoon, and came back to meet a neighborhood scrutiny chiefly designed to see how we stood it, we were married. As I look at it now, that was rather funny, but not nearly so funny—or, rather, so terrifying—as the fact

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that other older people, and institutions, reckoned the same thing: the unhearted State, the frozen Church, the stupid Society, and the censorious and gossipy Neighborhood, all agreed with us! "Yes," they chorused. "Now they're married and settled down." As a matter of fact, we weren't either one. We'd had what was locally known as "some" wedding! and we'd "gone to housekeeping," but we were not—and as it has turned out never will be—married. And as for having settled down—well, I don't know so much about *him*, now, but as for myself, Mr. Man, have you ever seen me in any mood or circumstance that would even in the slightest degree lead you to suspect that I had settled down?

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Reverting to the philosophical error-ists, even Shelley declares: "A system could not well have been devised more studiously hostile to human happiness than marriage." With all regard for the immortal author of "The Skylark," you have my opinion that Shelley, when he wrote that in his Notes to "Queen Mab," had only fallen into the perennial misconception—or, rather, into the almost universal loose use—of the term. If Shelley was right about marriage, then, never having been married, and yet desiring happiness with all the legal passion of my nature, I never want to be married. But Shelley, knowing love as he abundantly did, could not have literally meant his

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saying, for marriage is love sustained,
and sustained love is happiness.

Weddings are cheap and common.
Marriage is costly and rare. And oh,
the rapture of it! More than anything
else I want to be a *married* woman.

MENTAL VINEGAR

8

Like you, I am not much on promises. They are often fragile and snap under the pressure of time and circumstance. Even an uplifted hand and an oath of truthfulness often forerun false witness. We break down in our solemn commitments and find ourselves jelly when we thought we were rock. But one promise I make you, and make it now. How do I know I can keep it, through the years? Because I cannot break it, simply cannot, without violating my own nature. And that I shall never do. No matter how much I

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may want anything, even no matter how much I may love somebody and want to please that somebody, I shall never yield or bend my right of individual being. If God gave me anything, utterly and to keep, he gave me that—my individual being. So I shall continue to be my own person, my own self, easily identified in any throng of people or ideas, and on any planet of which I may now or later be an inhabitant.

I sort o' hear you saying, "That's going pretty strong, for a woman!" But I'd have you know, Mr. Man, that women—some women—are stronger than they are ordinarily reckoned, more determined and braver. Not all feminine minds are flaccid with vanity

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and silliness, not all feminine spines are willowy. Some of us, sir, stand straight like soldiers, eyes front, at command; at command of our own understanding of our own importance in the Scheme of Life. The world—and men—can't do without us, and we know it and it tickles us. That we are more or less inscrutable to the world—and men—and that we worry them at times with our presence and manners, is no concern of ours. That's their problem. The worry is all theirs. It is their business to put up with us and be nice to us and give us a decent deal. Under those conditions we women—some of us, anyway—will function as satisfactorily as any

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world or any men will ever function.

Oh, yes—about my promised promise! I said I'd make one—to you—and make it now. Well, here it is: I promise never, *never*, to bring you any mental vinegar. That may sound little, at first, but it's really a big, big promise—one of the biggest that anybody could make to anybody. There's so much sourness in human minds and human faces and human speech! So many people think and look and talk—bitter! They may not mean to—foolish dears—but they do. They're just a flock of bad news. And it's all so dispiriting and so unnecessary. Just think what this world would be if every mind were a cheer-full mind,

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if every face were a cheerful face, if every word were a word of cheer. Where would tears be? Dried! Where would hell be? Out o' luck!

This fellow Paul—who wasn't strong for women, probably because of the physical ailment at which he hinted in his letters—sent one fine recipe for sweetness to the ladies and gentlemen comprising the church at Philippi. This recipe ought to be tacked on every human heart, if you can tack a recipe on a human heart—I'm not sure about that. But, anyway, here is Paul's recipe for "sweetness and light," and happiness and dried tears and a vanished hell; you'll find it in the eighth verse of the fourth chapter of his letter to the Philippians:

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FINALLY, BRETHREN!

Whatsoever things are
TRUE

Whatsoever things are
HONEST

Whatsoever things are
JUST

Whatsoever things are
PURE

Whatsoever things are
LOVELY

Whatsoever things are of
GOOD REPORT—

If there be any
VIRTUE

If there be any
PRAISE—

THINK ON *THESE* THINGS!

Paul packed the whole of the good part of the New Testament into that one paragraph of his letter, and I, for one, know that if I remember, if I do what he said in that recipe, if I con-

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stantly think on the things he told the Philippians to think on, I can forget all the rest of the Bible and be saved from every sour thought and look and word, mine and the other fellow's, now and evermore! And that's what I'm doing—or trying to do—every day of my life, and it's so wonderful I'm just going to keep it up. In fact, it's gradually getting to be a part of my nature, of my individual being, and that's why I'm able to make you the keepable promise that I'll never, never bring you any mental vinegar.

To put it differently, and more gently, and not at all like a soldier—I just want to be your comfortable woman, all the time! Maybe that wouldn't suit you. And then again,

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maybe it would. You never can tell about these men!

But my car's outside and if my shopping's really going to get done, a certain party's got to step on the gas!

MY HEART TO MY HEART,

8

—————:

One thing I know you do not want from me—mere adulation, which, being sifted, means low-priced praise.

Of course I praise you, and bless you. But that is my own inner affair, my heart speaking to my heart. And, oh, so often!

In the day's brilliance, in the night's stillness, at the mountain's top, in the desert's stretch and heat-shimmer, with no near oasis, no shade for my weariness, no draft for my thirst, I say and say again, "*He* is in the

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world! Somewhere, with his strength and tenderness, *he* senses me!"

And then the day's brilliance shifts into urging flame; the night's stillness is as a soothing balm; at the mountain's top I am become tall, touching the low clouds with my fingers; and the desert has gone somewhere and seems not to return! No more am I weary, no more athirst. My secret praise of you has brought you near, as close as the scarf on my shoulders, as warm as a lingering kiss—with closed eyes.

Do you know why lovers kiss that way? Of course you do, but I will tell you: It is because *heaven is best realized without actual vision*. Sight must go into the discard, that feeling may

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be all, for feeling is the only consciousness, consciousness is the only life, and exalted feeling lifts life to transcendent levels where there is great gaining of Peace and Joy and that Power which is love.

Pity the poor ones who think love is emotion, or a low groping for sex satisfactions! Love is power, wise in its strength. It swings the spheres—on time—and nurtures every meadow blade till it comes to stalk and head. Love, silent and omnipotent, does all that is ALL, even to the merging of masculine and feminine in glorious fecundity, bringing wonder-children from womb and mind.

Is it strange that I want love, and that I want it for you? And inasmuch

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as my idea of love is mostly from you, because of you, and through you, thrilling me with lawful passion, is it strange that I praise you, secretly, my heart speaking to my heart?

Oh, I forgot! I do not mean to praise and bless you with words, spoken or otherwise. But I see I have done it, for I have written you—this letter!

Will you forgive me?

SO WAS I BORN

.8

—————:

I observe the restraint which is in nearly all of your letters to me: that is your way; and because it is your way, it is dear to me. But you see I take the other tack, mostly. I speak out, with my pen, my lips, my arms, my eyes—everything.

Once you said to me, and not, I fancy, in dispraise, “You emerge through the eyes.” I want to emerge through something, somehow—oh, how I long to emerge!—into the Great Open of Unhindered Life. And if I am frank and on the table like cards,

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it is because I cannot be otherwise.

I did not choose my parents, or make myself, or have anything to do with the kind of God who is behind whatever I am—the causal urge which expressed itself in me. Nor did I come into the world alone. I have a twin—Impulse. And often Impulse is wiser than I. Seldom do I go wrong under the quick flash of intuition. Even my prayer moments are less trustworthy, tinged, as they frequently are, with superstition and fear. And if sometimes I seem to overemphasize flesh as an essential and definitely contributive element in the welfare of spirit, it is because I am deeply sure that that particular thing should be stressed as an offset

THE THINGS SHE WROTE TO HIM

to pale piety and enervating asceticism
whose main mark is beauty-blindness.

So was I born. So do I fare. And if
certain signs are to be relied upon, it
would seem that you are journeying
with me and that your hand is in mine.

THE HOLINESS OF PASSION

8

—————:

My woman's body seems to be a bit turbulent to-day and not at all docile to rules. I doubt if it is even respectable, according to generally accepted standards. But my sense of right remains unstruck and a decent complacency is in my consciousness. I am even capable of prayer. And if that prayer, that asking, should be, in my instance, for a better understanding of the basic spirituality of sex, is there any well-organized human who would

look around for a stone to throw at that prayer?

The world is full of dusty books on the passion for holiness, but my eyes are heavy with looking for one clean book—one single little clean book—dealing solely with the holiness of passion. And I am speaking now of the desire of a woman for her man, and the desire of a man for his woman. There may be dozens of such books in the world, but they certainly aren't flung to the membership of any guild to which I happen to belong; and my orthodox bookseller, I am sure, would pass away if I were to ask him for a copy of the "Art of Loving." And yet if love—in its passionate sex-to-sex

expression— isn't, when at its best, an art, what is it? A trade? A profession? A mere indulgence? A domestic duty? Or a solemnly ordained measure for procreation?

In my humble feminine opinion (written down on this little mauve sheet of Woolworth note-paper, with the sea wind blowing my hair in my eyes) a high percentage of the thousands of split homes are split because the super-embrace is without art and therefore yields only a comparatively small degree of pleasure to one or both of the participants. This is due to ignorance, selfishness, or mere lust—one by one, or all three at the same time. And the remedy for this almost

universal human ill—the slow-coming remedy—is enlightenment, loving unselfishness, and consideration, each for each; and also the thing I pray for—the spiritualizing of sex in human thinking, which means and means simply, the heaven, or harmony, that is found in the true mating or union or marriage of the man and the woman.

If God is behind Nature, then God is certainly backing Nature, and Nature surely and cleverly hides her purpose of race-perpetuation in *pleasure*. Therefore, to the degree to which love and sex are humanly spiritualized, this fulfilment of the divine design may be said to constitute “the joy of the Lord.”

If I were to say this openly, I guess the missiles of a conventional public would at least whiz past my ears. But I am only saying it to *you!*

LITTLE THINGS LIKE CLIPS



—— ———:

You're certainly a clip. Yes, twelve clips! How in Heaven's name did you know I needed some clips to keep my papers together? Have you added clairvoyance to your other distinguishments, or was it just the common garden variety of Monday-morning hunch?

Anyway, the clips came, an even dozen, not one displaced—all in a faithful row attached to the top of your letter. I see you sent two sizes, six of each, and suppose the little ones

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are to hold my little thoughts together and the big ones are to hold my big thoughts together. If so, the proportion isn't exactly correct. You should have sent more of the smaller size, for sometimes I think I think the littlest thoughts of anybody. And then you come along and tell me my thinking helps you, and—bang!—I wouldn't think bigger anyhow, for that's big enough.

There's nothing very important about twelve clips, ordinary wire ones; we'll agree on that. You can get a whole boxful at Woolworth's for ten cents, maybe five. But you know perfectly well that I'd rather have these twelve clips on the top of your letter than all the clips that have been cut

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and shaped since the first wire-bending machine was invented, and that was way back in whatever-the-year-was. And I also know you know that a woman is so arranged that it's the little thoughtful things her man does for her that make her happiest, and not the big extravagant ones he can get pictures printed of in the rotogravure section. If every man knew as much as that, and carried it out with his woman, I can see a lot of these divorce judges slipping off the bench, right into what they call private practice. Oh, you're smart, you are—bless your darling heart—and if I had you here right now you wouldn't look a bit dignified, you'd be that mussed up!

And now, Mr. Man, I've got a se-

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cret, and some day I'm going to let you have it. Not now, but some day. Not another soul in the world would I let have it—just you. It's about clips and thoughts and lakes and mountains and clouds and men and women and business and religion and love and babies and nearly everything else. And it'll be punctuated, my secret will. (That last sentence isn't. I left all the little marks out on purpose.) You don't want to know what my secret is, do you? You do? Well, you've just got to wait, that's all, till I get good and ready.

BOOKBEARING

18

—————:—————

Now cross your heart and promise that you won't tell my secret to anybody, not to a single soul, because the very limit of people who can know and keep a secret is two, and that two have to be practically one or it'll be in the papers.

I'm whispering now, and you've got to listen and pay attention or some of it will get away from you and you won't know as much about it as I do, and I shouldn't like that. I don't want to do anything or plan anything from now on unless you know about it and

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feel, with me, that it is worth while and that I am up to it. Somehow I can't imagine myself being my best or doing my best without you. I guess that's why I found you—to be plussed by the nourishment of the bread of your nearness.

I want to write a book. In fact, I've decided, if you approve. But it must be what I call a durable book, not in binding—that's easy—but in content and effect. Not for money or anything else would I consciously add to the welter of vain, ephemeral, or negligible writing. . . .

No, Mr. Man; my mood has changed. I can't tell you all my secret, all that I intend to do. I can't start in the spirit of dependence. In spite of all

you mean to me, this must be altogether my own choice and enterprise. The patience of gestation and the pain of bringing forth must be the burden of one, not two. So is it written in the plan of procreation, and in bookbearing the process is the same. Only the author can suffer his book-child into the world and authenticate it, so I cannot lean on you, but you shall not be farther away nor less beloved.

This idea of separateness in companionship and progress is in all nature. I haven't told you about them yet, but my pair of bald eagles maintain their independence, each flying alone, neither propelling the other, but both bound for the same objective—the nest on the hill, and the brood. So

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I shall go on and write my book, all by myself, whether it lives a day or a decade, whether it brings a fig or a farthing.

But I guess you'll want to see it, bit by bit, particularly if I put my very self into the screed. You know you've always said you like to look at me!

A MATTER OF LAKES

8

—————:

So you have a lake? And it doesn't belong to you, because it belongs first to the State and after that to everybody else, only everybody else doesn't visit the property? But it is your lake because you love it? And you're there now, thinking about me?

Well, well; that's a pretty paradox. But you needn't feel so smart and exceptional, for I have a lake, too, and got it on the same terms! Your letter reached me there, or here, rather—forwarded.

THE THINGS SHE WROTE TO HIM

My lake seems very remote from everything, though on the far shore about once a day I can see an automobile the size of a fly crawling along the base of the sentinel mountain which guards this lovely region, never tiring, never sleeping. And the place being—or seeming—quite remote from everything, mail-getting is slow and infrequent, for there isn't even a Rural Free to help us out. But there are French Canadian farmers settled sparsely along the rough and unpaved roadway which leads to this camp. They live in one- or two-room mortared log houses built akimbo, breed unconscionably, and litter their front yards with rusting farm implements

and tousled children garbed mostly in tattered adult clothing or in flour sacks with holes cut through for head and arms. But these native neighbors have kind hearts and there's hardly anything they won't do for you if you "strike 'em right."

They are our mail angels, bringing letters and parcels from the village post-office, six miles down the valley, and, in their flamboyant jumpers with plaids the size of a city block, are far more picturesque and exciting than any Rural Free. When one of them lopes down the road with mail and good-will, everybody runs.

That's the way your letter got to me. And when I saw the handwriting,

THE THINGS SHE WROTE TO HIM

well—I can't and won't tell you how I felt and the foolish things I did. You will just have to guess it out all by yourself.

No, it can't be that way at all. That wouldn't be fair. You may do a little preliminary guessing if you want to, but I can and will tell you everything I did when your letter came and I found out, in my room with the locked door, what you said in it. Only, this telling can't be now, nor in *any* letter. There must be real words, and gestures, and certain illustrative behavior—furnished by me, a very visible me, with you as a close audience. When? I don't know exactly. But a song-sparrow perched near where I am writing,

THE THINGS SHE WROTE TO HIM

twisting his little head this way and that, seems to be singing something about "Soon!"

*DRUNK AS A LORD—OR
A LADY*

8.

—————:
Can you imagine a heart that is just a jumble of joy? If so, imagine mine! Physiologically, and in the alleged science of medicine, there is, I believe, something very dire and menacing called a heart murmur. Nothing like that in *my* heart, nothing like that. A symphony in crescendo, perhaps, even screams of delight, but no murmur.

And why? Well, because of the wine I am drinking—to blessed excess. I

am drunk. No glass, no bubbles, no alcoholic throat-wetting, but nevertheless drunk. Gloriously, exultantly, ecstatically drunk. And may God save me from any institutional cure and grant the perpetuation of my inebriacy!

Some wine is red, some white, some amber, but this wine, filling my heart with various noisy joys, is mostly blue and green—blue of the cloud-foamed sky and dancing water, green of the far and fatherly mountains, green of the near balsams and beeches, cedars and maples, and green of the graceful grass, rhythmic in the wind. Of this wine I have drunk a lot this unforgettable August morning, and

THE THINGS SHE WROTE TO HIM

that is what is the matter with my heart and my sobriety!

You see, I have been four hours on the shore of my lake, lolling in the sun, being kissed rapturously and continuously by the summer wind which literally journeyed across the water to do it, and drinking myself, not to death—but to life!

Have you got any wine at your lake like I've got at my lake? I just bet you have, and that you've drunk a lot of it, too!

*THE REVEL OF ONE
WITH ONE*

8

————— —————:

Two kingfishers, male and female, garrulous and gay—preening, splashing, diving—careening on vibrant wing over the rippled cove; two bald eagles, male and female, homing to their brood hungrily agape in the coarse nest high in the dead and weather-beaten oak on the hill; two wild ducks, male and female, veering unerringly toward the pond of their desire! All these, and more, have I seen with my own eyes in one little

THE THINGS SHE WROTE TO HIM

hour, pressing into me a new awareness of the Plan's inevitable two—male and female.

And then, ascending, the whole world has, for reminder, your oft-cited Abelard and Heloise; my Robert and Elizabeth; and, constantly and without fail, the *au naturel* Adam and Eve—historically impossible but true in legend, which is often the most authentic chronicle.

You and I and Mr. Edison didn't build the universe this way. We were not even called in as consulting engineers. The whole thing was just handed to us, as is, and *the spectacle of the pair*, and their behavior, continues to fascinate the race.

THE THINGS SHE WROTE TO HIM

The revel of one with one! Two, always two, male and female. What need of a third? save, perhaps, a witnessing star!

MARVEL MORNING

8

—————:

Did you ever see a loon dive into a Paisley shawl? I did, this morning, at the turn of seven.

The lake which had danced till dawn was sound asleep with the sun in its face. Its loves of the night had evidently gone home at daybreak. Not one amorous breeze lingered to stir its slumbers with a kiss, and just before the punctual sun crept over the eastern pines the terpsichorean water had gone somnolent and metamorphosed into a looking-glass, reproducing in faithful duplicate the massed

THE THINGS SHE WROTE TO HIM

foliage on the surrounding mountains and the white birches and other trees closest to the shores. You had to notice the white birches most, doubled, as they were, by the looking-glass. By reason of their delicate beauty and grace they seemed to have been chosen for front-row positions by some Ziegfeld of nature who was eager to get eyes cast their way.

It is late August now and in these mountains the pendulum of the seasons is swinging autumn-ward—cool mornings and cooler nights, extra blankets and chairs facing the fireplace before bedtime. Nature is choosing from her dye-works colors other than green. Yellows, russets, purples,

THE THINGS SHE WROTE TO HIM

and reds she is using now, extravagantly and with innumerable shadings.

Apparently she has thrust her iridescent yarn into a Scottish loom that has turned out an oversized Paisley shawl with which she has draped the mountains; and the mountains, not to be outdone, and in the spirit of this marvel morning, saw fit to lay the shawl gently upon the looking-glass, but not so dryly that a loon could not swim upon it.

I know that all this is exactly so, because at the turn of seven the camp binoculars showed me one of these stately and eccentric aquatic hermits two thirds of the way across the looking-glass, pridefully preening, and go-

ing through his solitary sport of black-wing flapping in an incredible standing posture, revealing a white breast and other less distinguishable loon embellishments.

In the midst of this rare entertainment a skiff pushed off from the far shore and frightened the solo performer, and then I saw what I said I saw—a loon dive into a Paisley shawl, coming up again at the fringe of it a quarter of a mile away. And soon after that the sleeping mirror-like lake, kissed into wakefulness by a returning breeze, gave the Paisley shawl back to the mountains and started to dance again, this time in the sun.

And now, Mr. Man, honest and

THE THINGS SHE WROTE TO HIM

true: what better letter could I write you on this particular morning than one about a lake, a shawl, and a loon?

STILL WATERS

8

—————:—————

Oh, the matchless wonder of your friendship! To me it is as lovely as pearls upon pink roses; as steady as the flame of my blue candle; as thrilling as the drama of a mountain sunset; as intimately warm and comforting as the glow of oaken embers; as spontaneous as the quick laughter of children; as purely white as a satiny birch in a forest of flickering sun; as lasting as Truth itself!

Without seeming to try, you bring to me the satisfactions of peace and

THE THINGS SHE WROTE TO HIM

quietude, and the assurance of all good things—health of body and mind, material amplitude, and the bliss of spiritualized love. All these are so a part of you that even to think on them is to feel you strongly, and very near. Their presence in my thought brings a rare sense of opulence—my fortune is in you. As I gaze into the cool green of the tree which shades my window, or when I walk among hurrying people, or when I bend under a blow of seemingly adverse circumstance, I am aware of your steadying influence.

You who place our relationship on the rock of propinquity, never on the sands of sensation; you who define the tenure of our friendship as Sincerity

THE THINGS SHE WROTE TO HIM

and the basis of that friendship as Understanding, tell me, will you continue patient till I am sure my own desire has grown as lofty as your own? And when cutting winds of fear blow cold upon me, and unreckoned disappointment lashes me, will you then always enfold me and shield me with the blessing of your nearness? And will you continue to soothe and counsel me and still my tossed heart with that voice which never seems to lose its tone of reasoned fearlessness? *Will you? always.*

I ask because it comforts me to ask; yet before the asking I know what your answer will be, for the assurance of your constancy is in my own heart

THE THINGS SHE WROTE TO HIM

where you yourself have indelibly written it.

Yes, there *is* a God! For are you not *my own*?

DEFERRED DIVIDENDS

18

Mingled with my delight when I am with you and near you, there is a pronounced element of personal vanity. I have never confessed it before, even to myself. Now it is your turn to know, and therefore it is quite possible, Mr. Confessor, that some proud words may ruffle themselves like peacocks and strut around under your very eyes.

It's just this way: I love to feel I am bringing you something extraordinary. Something you have never known. Something no one else has

ever been able to bring to you. That I am filling spaces in your life that no one else has ever been able to fill. That my tunes are sweeter to your ear than any one before me has piped for your pleasure. And that you are scaling heights with me undreamed before.

This is the very essence of vanity. I admit it. But sometimes I wonder if you have ever really been loved before. No, *that* you couldn't have been. Not in the ultimate. Why? Because you make me conscious that I am bringing you out; out beyond your former self—far beyond—and because you make me feel your love for me in a degree of ardency approaching newness, a veritable virginity of devotion.

Then it comes over me that we are experiencing together a profoundness of feeling and affection not hitherto possible to either of us, and for distinctly different reasons incident to our respective lives.

Perhaps this is our compensation for arid years, our reward for waiting till we could meet full-grown rather than at a time of comparative adolescence.

And you, too, may properly be a bit vain if the mood impels, for you have startled me into new life, into passioned joy in romance and affectional adventure—with you.

And I thought my fires were out!

THE WORLD'S LITTLE SONS

8

—————:

Last night, after I had listened to the crackle of the gravel as your car sped down the drive, and turned to re-enter the room we had such a short moment before left, a great wave of loneliness seemed to engulf me. So soon was I homesick for you! And you had scarcely reached the highway!

Then, as I put my body prone, relaxed utterly, turned out the light, and closed my eyes, the dear satisfactions of our wonderful Day passed pan-

THE THINGS SHE WROTE TO HIM

oramicallv through my remembering consciousness.

Mentally I added up our interchanged thoughts and reciprocal sensings, and oh, the sum of them! Thrilled by my uncountable riches, my loneliness and homesickness for you shifted quickly to happiness and thankfulness for the harmonies of our oneness, for in all my recalling I could find no blur of indefinition, no blot of selfishness, no sting of regret for what we have both let go to be—as we are!

It is so sweet to feel you are needed!
You have said, more than once and passionately, that you need me. How insincere would be any protestation on my part that I do not know exactly

THE THINGS SHE WROTE TO HIM

what you mean, or that I do not agree with you, or that I am not fully persuaded of my capacity to bless your life with what you have hitherto lacked, spiritually, mentally, sentimentally, and sensuously. And your very need of me spurs me to vaster loving.

In spite of your moral stature, educational experience, and competence in the rulership of your own affairs, you are just one of the world's little sons—and hungry at that! So I will feed you, my way, and mother you with my heart. And sometimes, when you are quite by yourself, and perhaps a bit down because of something that is troubling you, you shall sense my nearness and understanding and say

THE THINGS SHE WROTE TO HIM

silently, all to yourself, "She comes to me. The flame of her presence puts my darkness away. With her, in the light, I am strong to meet my problem, and win!"

THE MAN-AND-WOMAN SITUATION

8

—————: —————:

Somehow, try as I may, I cannot seem to keep my heart to myself so far as our special Day is concerned. So I must go on about it in this letter following the one I mailed yesterday, and if I add a few specific and earnest convictions about the man-and-woman situation generally, I am sure you won't mind.

Also, as no eye but yours will see to just what extent I ease my mind, frankness shall rule the mood and method, as far as a letter will allow.

And maybe when my deliberate expression of opinion is finished, sealed and sent, I shall be able to take up some less serious subject suitable for lighter treatment, even for dalliance or persiflage. This one isn't, for in it—the man-and-woman situation—is wrapped, to my thinking, the weal or less than weal of what we call human beings, of whom there are quite a number in this wagging world, with more, lots more, to come.

But to get back to our Day, and not so far back, at that. It was only the day before yesterday. My whole being stirs at the mere thought of it!

But I am a woman, and maybe a man's being can't stir that way; you will know best about that!

I think that, with me, you set that Day down in our calendar of days as one of the best; best because of the altitudes of thought and feeling mutually achieved. That, to me, is what days are—climbing times, and when they're not, we'd better be asleep or in some kindred desuetude.

We did not enter upon that Day with any notion of special felicity. It dawned for us like other days and with no more promise. And yet no Land of Promise was ever lovelier than the one we reached that Day—you and I. 'And now, afterward, you are probably more of a man, and I am assuredly more of a woman. Is it not so? "Oh, yes, it is so!" Your answer

seems to be here at this moment, almost before my needless question is set down. Such is the concord into which we seem to have entered under strange and gracious pilotage, and when each of us at the beginning expected so little!

You will remember at the close of that Day, *our* Day, when the sun had set and the night was full of stars, mute witnesses of another Stellar Happening, or rather Effect, we shared a consciousness of more than usual serenity and complacence. We were at peace with ourselves and our kind, and life seemed rife with God and Opportunity. Our doors were not closed doors; our peaks were not unattainable. One day had passed for us

THE THINGS SHE WROTE TO HIM

set out from other days in beauty and love and inspiration and hope and spiritual ascendance.

I am glad and grateful, both, for the experience of being with you—as we were—that Day.

Perhaps, in those sacrosanct hours, I may have said something or done something or been something that will help you to be a *farther reacher* than you otherwise might have been. Oh, if this could only be! If I might truly add to your onwardness I should feel the feel of an almost incomparable accomplishment, for in the current activities of man you are needed, needed at your best.

I think that in the moments when labor is not, because legitimate lassi-

THE THINGS SHE WROTE TO HIM

tude has succeeded labor, when the stars are out and the sheen of the moon is on the river, and the urge of Life and Love is in the veins of mind and body; when the lure of forward paths and soul altitude is stronger than the strength of Samson though it tears down no temples; that the finest thing in the lot of the man and woman who are comforted and complemented in companionship, is the touch of flesh on flesh, caress answering caress, with whatever climax the gods allow. This, of course, in its best estate, is basically religious, with spiritualities understood and duly emphasized in the thought of this man and this woman who have accepted

THE THINGS SHE WROTE TO HIM

the scriptural dictum and fulfilled the law through love.

When I sit down to write or to undertake any creative task I find that I cannot do my best work under the inhibitions of sheer feminine solitude, but rather under the breath and glow of the roseate aura of my understanding, though absent, man. I say "*my* understanding man" advisedly, because *your* understanding man or *an* understanding man would not do at all. He must be mine, my very own, and only mine—not, however, in the spirit of irrevocable possessiveness, for at the moment of his own choosing he may cease to be mine and I will agree. There is no compromise in this,

THE THINGS SHE WROTE TO HIM

no abrogation, no fooling with the actualities of spiritual unity, which is the highest thing in sex potentiality, planned and promoted by whatever God there is.

And now, after all that, Mr. Man, what do you suppose just happened? I have been writing in the veranda with the white bloom of the Traveler's Joy creeping over the railing, and the croon of the lapping water sifting through the pines. All morning a male catbird, clad in the conventional gray of his kind, has been behaving most *unconventionally*. From a bush not ten feet from where I am sitting he has persistently tried to flirt with me, and gone through all sorts of foolery with throat and wing to attract my at-

THE THINGS SHE WROTE TO HIM

tention. But I refused to notice him or have anything to do with him. This evidently made him furious, for he just hopped up on my table, made a great fluttering among my papers, and flew back to his bush, venting a lot of vociferous and sardonic chatter. Maybe he disagrees with what I've been writing! And certainly—like all the rest of the world—he doesn't know a thing about our Day!

NOTHING DOING

8

—————:

A while back—quite unsolicited, I assure you—you wrote and gave me your magnanimous permission to browse about among men I know, or don't know, and see if I could find one I like better than I like you. You didn't say it exactly that way, but you said it. Remember? Surely you remember. No man could write an unusual letter like that to a woman and not remember. But just by way of reminder, Mr. Man, look once again at a few of your own words:

“I want you to know other men, not

THE THINGS SHE WROTE TO HIM

a few, but many. If a man is thrown your way, and seems interesting, employ—I desire it—all necessary time and means to arrive at what he really is. Give to him all that you have for him, and take from him all that he has for you. You are a wonderful woman and should be shared.”

Then followed some paragraphs of yours, to me, unanswerable philosophy with which I am in heartiest accord. But with all regard for your innate truthfulness, which is as much a part of your nature as your unfailing kindness and wide-mindedness, I don't believe a word of what you say when you tell me you want me to browse about among other men, except, possibly that you want me to be mightily

and unchangeably sure that I want you a million times more than I want any other man—and for always.

I suppose that that would be natural enough, especially for a man, a man of your sort, of which, alas, you are apparently the only living specimen. But I'm not going to do what you tell me to do, for the simple and sufficient reason that I've already done it—and made up my mind, irrevocably. In the vernacular, and if you'll let me continue to be that way, I'm "all set."

By now you yourself know that I am a most desiring and exacting woman, but you meet and appease me in ways beyond accurate count or adequate description. It is amazing what

THE THINGS SHE WROTE TO HIM

a many-sided attraction you have for me. I say amazing because, by comparison, most of the other men I have known in other days now seem to have been mere vagabonds of the hour, even though their so-called "position in life," in money ways and social ways, would conceivably have required at least moderate mental and moral capital for effective operation in the world of women, especially women of discernment and discrimination.

These men, these erstwhile acquaintances, as I see it now, and without speaking sweepingly of one or all, and, as I said, by comparison, did not speak your language; they did not know your God; they were without

native tact and grace of manners; their eyes were not your eyes; their hands were not your hands; they did not converse in the low rich tones of one I know; their pretty speeches only annoyed me; they did not know when to leave me by myself; they did not treat food with whimsical disdain, but rather voraciously devoured it with mere whet of appetite which killed my own enjoyment in lunching or dining; they did not work with your type of heart-joy and engrossment in the good they might accomplish; they did not rate their play-hours highly as real contributions to a richer life, nor ponder them in zestful anticipation and grateful retrospection; they were without charm of poise, and

the unsimulated modesty of men who have patiently done worth-while things.

These men meant nothing to me except as transitory human phases of experience at a comparatively unthoughtful period of my life. Right now I'm thinking to better avail, know exactly what I want in the man way, and therefore am not, most emphatically *not*, going to browse about!

You close your gracious letter of emancipation with this most enchanting lure to liberty: "The door of your cage, my lady, is open and held back; the sunlight is upon the hyacinths; the breeze is stirring the young leaves of the maples; and I am listening for the fluttering of wings!" No thank

THE THINGS SHE WROTE TO HIM

you, Mr. Man. You'll have to listen a long, long time. I'm going to stay right where I am!

A ONE-WAY WOMAN

8

—————:

After all, every artist-longing finds its source of inspiration in the desire to please through expression, doesn't it?—first one's self, then one's audience or patron. Or perhaps it's the other way round! But I do so want to please you, and if I succeed I shall please myself—mightily.

You have told me much of your secret ambitions, and I have long since given them heart-preference over my own. They are very precious to me, so precious that if I could show my love as openly as I would like, there would

be little time for the cultivation and execution of artistic plans for myself, because I would seek before all else to urge you toward the realization of your cherished dreams. To spur you and to see those dreams fulfilled would in itself be all the glory my heart could crave.

Would I had the right to assume partial responsibility for insuring to the world the achievement of your aims! You are so patient and modest, you are so generous to others, your constructive reach toward current human needs is so important and timely, that I eagerly look for the widening of the channel for the flow of your genius. I long to surround you with my own sort of care and solicitude, and

THE THINGS SHE WROTE TO HIM

nurture every creative bud that it may be brought to bloom. Oh, how cheap and vain material ambition and social blare seem compared with the great happiness such a privilege would bring me!

I wonder if my own particular brand of care and solicitude would appeal to you, in cumulation; because, as I dream about it, it seems to have but one mode of expression. But, as under a shower, some people tire of continuity and repetition, even in the Department of Ardent Regard. Somehow I have an idea that under smiling conditions I *could* please you. And with the very hope of it my spirit soars!

Now this is the one way my care

and solicitude would take: I would want to love you mightily, with sustained devotion, not expecting you to react always with physical signals of appreciation (though these are the frequent expression of your own self and of my own self and of our two merged selves) but rather, for the sheer joy of it—because it is the very life of me—I would shield you, cherish you, and inspire you, thereby bringing your goal of accomplishment into clearer view. This would be so little for me to do, and so much!—for through the doing I should find my kind of happiness and human woman satisfaction.

Do you think you could manage to get along with such a performance?

THE THINGS SHE WROTE TO HIM

But I warn you of one thing: I'd be dreadfully disappointed if it didn't work out *my* way—and I have only one! You see, after a sort, I'm quite selfish about you. I couldn't brook any interference with my program in your behalf. And I'd be broken-hearted if you didn't like my motions—didn't like the way I did things, the way I loved you, the way I shielded you, inspired you, encouraged you, and shared, as much as I might, your undertakings. But, after all, I've only just one way: there's no scattering of method. And I must have a monopoly. It wouldn't suit me to have some one else come messin' around—no other woman, not even a nice mother-in-law.

DREAM AT DAWN

8

—————:—————

Are you alone? Quite alone? So alone that you could hear me if I whispered something very very important? Are you? Come close then. Let me put my cheek on yours, my lips close to your ear. Now listen—hard:

I love you.

Did you get that? You didn't? Well, I'll whisper it again:

I love you.

Did you hear me then? You *didn't*? Why, that's strange; I said it very slowly and distinctly. I'll try once more!

I love you—LOVE YOU!

There! you heard *that*, I 'know. Surely you did. I thought so! And I'll wager you heard me the first two times and just wouldn't say so because you like things in threes. Oh, yes, you told me you did, once when we were where the mountain laurel was. Remember? There were some kisses (I won't say who started it) and you said the first one was lovely, the second was lovelier, and the third was loveliest of all! And there have been other threes, too. ("Threes, too" looks odd, but I'll leave it because it's so.)

Well, anyway, you know now what it was I wanted to tell you. Oh, I've been waiting to tell you ever since

early this morning; ever since about four o'clock, to be specific. I wakened in the stillness of dawn, thinking of you—thrillingly thinking of you. But before that, before I had started to think at all, my *body* seemed to have been dreaming about you while my mind was still in the subconscious, which capability of the human is now a fact in modern science. Dreams are sometimes wonderfully vivid and enlivening. This one was.

Maybe you'll smile when I tell you what I determined to do, lying there quietly in the half-light, thinking. I made up my mind to be gaily reckless. I resolved to thrust aside every prudish prudence that separates us and

THE THINGS SHE WROTE TO HIM

join you, this very day, in your retreat!

I can hear you now as you say, whimsically, "Well, and why didn't you?"

That's just the trouble: *why* I didn't. I didn't, because I'm still, and to a shameful degree, convention-bound. I didn't, because of fear—fear, the thing that, as you've so often said, makes nearly everybody foolishly miserable three fourths of the time.

Oh, I know what you're saying. You're saying that I'm very often, too often, governed by appearances, which, though the acts behind the appearances are finely motivated, cause

eyebrows to lift when the appearances are coarsely judged in the cold light of conventionality. I *am* fearful of appearances—and talk. I admit it. I don't at all like this phase of my state of mind.

Several times a week I tell myself: If I were a man I'd live my own life regardless of what the world might say. Yet I can't say that *that* puerile alibi jibes with my notions of the so-called emancipated woman. If we women claim to be on an equal basis with men in free action, in politics, in business, in property rights, in the professions, and in every other way, then surely we should be eager to assert our right to exercise all of the privileges of that autochthonous sex,

which of course includes that of living as we'd like to live, without being stoned for our conduct. I'm not that strong—yet. I'm only weakly independent. If I were really brave in my own convictions regarding my woman's freedom, I'd assert a few of them to preserve my body vitality—that cellular exuberance with which I've been so generously dowered. It is not good for me to be alone—apart from you.

✓ Letters are so difficult. I might almost say that letters, mine especially, are wholly dissatisfying as a medium of expression, though probably that is because the fervid reality of sex fusion, as we've come to know it, is so surpassing. There is apparently no

substitutive mode of similarly exalted communion between lovers. Tell me, do you know of any? really?

I was thinking this morning—oh, I thought so many things this morning, in the dawn—how I'd like to hide myself away from the world, with a certain some one, and just make love. Why, that would class me as a manufacturer, wouldn't it? and probably with the modern yearning for mass production! —

Do you remember that one night, when the silence was on, you read aloud to me George Moore's "The Lovers of Orelay"? Moore has delicious, and I suppose changeless, ideas about how two adventuring souls may meet and know each other—well. I

THE THINGS SHE WROTE TO HIM

shall always remember him as I visualized him while you read to me. His first evening with Doris at Orelay; the quaint living-room; the bedroom with the high four-poster; the maid-servant who didn't need to bring these lovers their meals regularly, or on time, because they were not particularly hungry—for food, that kind of food—being otherwise nourished.

→ There are some other messages I long to whisper, intimate beyond any three-word sentence whispered thrice. But I'm denied that joy—now. So I must try to bridge the miles once more with written things which I pray may not be wholly futile in letting you see my heart.

“How do I love thee? Let me count

the ways," and then Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote her ways in a sonnet, one way in each line. But I can't do that, for you. I just couldn't begin to tell you in fourteen little short written lines how much I love you and why. But—

Come closer. Take me in your arms. Bend your face near to mine, and my lips will give you some special words with measureless meaning. Now, we'll write a poem, together—the kind of poem Richard Jefferies would approve, glorifying the soul-life, as he would say, through a spiritual celebration of our body-selves. And we won't care a bit if it is never published, will we? No. We'll publish it ourselves; in our own hearts; not

THE THINGS SHE WROTE TO HIM

more widely. When? Oh, when the gods send us another Day; or maybe—who knows?—when we waken together in some dream dawn, not too far away!

VIA THE INFINITE HEART

8

—————:

Your two last letters, though written a day apart, chummed with each other through the mail and finally, the envelopes somewhat travel-stained, lay in my hand together. Two in one mail! Joy and double-joy!

I examined the postmarks to see which was written first. Ordinarily the reading of letters in correct sequence is important, but in letters of the heart it is imperative. Think how mixed a woman would be if her lover avowed his love in one letter, repudi-

THE THINGS SHE WROTE TO HIM

ated it in the next, and she read the second one first! But think, also, how sure and steady she would be if, read in sequence, the first letter contained the love avowal and the second came chasing after the first to add underscoring! These two letters of yours are in the latter category.

And talk about a thrilled woman! You should have seen me. My heart climbed swiftly the Hill of Delight and then descended and climbed more slowly the Hill of Thankfulness. In human experience these should always be reckoned twin hills, ranged together, for the summit happiness of both is vastly similar. So Glad, so Grateful, my whole being tingling and aglow with the bliss of long de-

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sire, now completely—yes, regally—fulfilled!

The news of your love for me was of course not news at all. I have heard it by brook-side and sea, under the night stars and the noon sun, in remote glens where the discreet and considerate pines laid soft couches for our rapture. In hundreds of glorified places you have told me your love, by voice and silence; by hand on quivering hand; by caress of lip on lip and mind on mind; and always, always, without interval, have I known it and been assured, though an ocean sun-dered us, or the mail, perhaps, had gone down with the ship.

So the love in these letters of yours and the passion of it held no surprise.

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Rather was it the element of chronicled definiteness, *the demand set down*, and your final and written commitment to the perpetuation of our relationship. (*Our* relationship. Oh, my God! how merciful You were to see that this love was not all his, that this love was not all mine, but our love, *ours*, his and mine, together—equal partners in the Business of Living!)

If our friendship, which began in the dark earth of the conventional and commonplace, promising little, has thrived and fairly startled us both with the unexpected fragrance of its enduring bloom, it must be because of the mental, spiritual, and physical nurture which we have naturally

given it. I say *naturally* because culture of affection and understanding can never be bestowed under man-made law, force, argument, whim or prudential choice. Always must it spring from native endowment of spirit, mind, and body, and then only when the articulate two, the right man and the right woman, come together in the rare providence of perfect mat-
ing.

Olive Schreiner, from her cherished Africa, wrote to Havelock Ellis in 1907: "I believe that there is a purely vital attraction between human creatures (not only sexual in the ordinary sense) which will always awake when these two persons meet, and where that strange vital attraction is

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supplemented by a strong intellectual sympathy, then you have the most perfect deathless relations that can exist between two human creatures."

This, or something nearly this, has evidently come to you and me, in what, a few lines back, I termed the providence of perfect mating. I did not selectively summon our love, nor did you. Doubtless our individual hearts, mutual in their need, vocal and eloquent with hunger, sent out the call which was heard and answered by the Infinite Heart who mothers all Love and rears it in strength that the children of earth may not perish in a desert of loneliness.

· And when Love came we did not do as many do. We did not fail to know

its face. We did not let small prudences stifle the "Hail!" we gave to love. We did not say, "Just wait a while till we attend to This or That." Nor did we say, "Come back again when certain persons have approved your advent in our hearts." Oh, in a way, we were brave, you and I. We threw to the winds the hindering reasons which stressed negation and delay, counting the assurance of our own minds ample witness to the wisdom of our choice of each other. And Love came in and supped with us and is still at our board, blessed Guest—the bringer of nourishing comradeship, unwearied inspiration, and appeasing content.

I doubt if our love would be as full

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and symmetrical if we knew each other less. Myriad minor intimacies; observance of behavior under nearly every program of human circumstance; gentle, half-humorous play of mind on mind; simulated differences for the fun of contest; mutual knowledge of flesh format and emotional predilections—these, with our bigger knowings and understandings, all tend to save us from future disillusionment and its attendant revulsion.

Oh, for a long time we have been getting to this point where we know that speculation has been eliminated and that our affectional investment is sound, and productive of dependable dividends. I am sure I do not need to

be a mystery to you, to keep you guessing, in order to make you love me more; and I know that the better I know you—the inner and outer you—the more I honor you and desire you.

Long did I picture this sort of relation with a man—some man—a revealing relation yielding no shock or shame, but had despaired of ever experiencing it. And then you came to me with your satisfactions and made me a very happy woman, saying reciprocally, after a while, that I had come to you with *my* satisfactions and had made you a very happy man; and now, at a perfectly proper moment, when nearly anything is decently possible, you write me these two provoc-

ative letters! I don't know, Mr. Man, just what I ought to do with them—or you. . . . Oh, yes I do, yes I *do*!

If, as Leonard Merrick declares in "Conrad in Quest of His Youth," "A man is young as often as he falls in love," the same must be true of a woman, for I, being in love, very determinedly and altogether immodestly in love, was never so conscious of Youth as I am at this glorious moment. And you say you want me. Again you say it. You say *that*, after you've had me in all the ways a man can have a woman!—except, perhaps, in continuous and open companionship. Very well. Here is my answer to your letters of love and demand: If, knowing the all of me, you want me

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more than you have had me, and can devise the way, take me, on your own terms, with one small proviso of my own, which is—let it be soon!

Oh! my Beloved!

THE END

